

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: April 24, 2006

From :  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Executive Director

Subject: **Agenda Item 16: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 50 funds to the City of Thousand Oaks for acquisition of Mountclef Ridge parcels (APN's 521-0-011-365, -375, and -385), Thousand Oaks.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant of \$500,000 of Proposition 50 funds to the City of Thousand Oaks for acquisition of Mount Clef Ridge parcels, 18.67 acres, (APN's 521-0-011-365, -375, and -385), Thousand Oaks.

Legislative Authority: Section 33204(c) of the Public Resources Codes states, in part:

The conservancy may, in accordance with the priorities of the plan, do the following: . . . (c) Award grants to state agencies, cities, counties, resource conservation districts, and park and recreation districts for the purpose of acquiring sites identified as necessary for park, recreation, or conservation purposes and for development of essential related facilities.

Background: The City of Thousand Oaks has requested a grant of \$500,000 from the Conservancy for the acquisition of three parcels on Mount Clef Ridge on the northern border of the city in order to preserve the land as a key link in the Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency's (COSCA) permanent open space system. (See also the attached Grant Application.) The City's match, if the acquisition goes forward, is \$1,665,000. An additional \$100,000 is being requested from COSCA, for a total project cost of \$2,265,000 including the City's closing and transaction costs.

The Mount Clef Ridge area is included in the Conservancy's Workprogram. The parcels under consideration are an important wildlife habitat linkage, connecting Wildwood Park on the west and Joel McCrea Ranch to the east, which, if preserved, will close a "ring of open space" gap in the 15,000-acre public open space system owned and/or managed by COSCA. (COSCA is the joint powers agency formed between the Conejo Recreation and Park District and City of Thousand Oaks in 1978.)

The Mount Clef parcels drain to the Arroyo Santa Rosa, a tributary of Calleguas Creek in the Calleguas Creek Watershed, a Ventura County coastal watershed as specified in Proposition

50. Section 79570 (c) of the Water Code provides that half of Proposition 50 funds allocated to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy “ . . . shall be expended for protection of the Santa Monica Bay and Ventura County coastal watersheds, pursuant to Division 23 (commencing with Section 33000) of the Public Resources Code.” The Conservancy has long been a participant in the multi-agency/multi-stakeholder Calleguas Creek Watershed Management cooperative planning effort. The protection of upland habitat and watersheds (including the Arroyo Santa Rosa and Mount Clef Ridge) is one of the recommended actions in the draft Creek Watershed Management Plan to ameliorate issues of water quality, habitat and recreation, flooding, and sediment loading in Calleguas Creek and Mugu Lagoon.

The property supports riparian vegetation in an ephemeral stream corridor, in addition to coastal sage scrub, coastal sage/chaparral, grasslands, and volcanic rock outcroppings important for groundwater recharge. Conejo dudleya (*Dudleya abramsii* ssp. *parva*), a plant species on the Federal threatened list, is found on site.

The land is zoned for Hillside Planned Development. In April 2005, the Conservancy provided comments on the draft Environmental Impact Report prepared by the City for proposed development. The owners are willing sellers, and the City’s purchase offer is within the appraisal value for the three lots. Final execution of the proposed Conservancy grant is contingent upon the owners’ formal acceptance of the City’s purchase offer, and final approval of the matching funds from the City and COSCA.